

## **MEMORANDUM**

Date: May 6, 2005

To: Greg Carpenter

CC: Angela Reynolds

From: Mercedes McLemore,

Subject: Minutes from April 13, 2005 Los Cerritos Wetlands Meeting

Meeting Notes:

Roll Call:

Denis Craig—Island Village HOA  
Lisa Rinaldi—Pacific Villas HOA  
Sonia Pawluczyk—AHIA  
Tom Lockhart—Belmont Shores Mobile Estates  
Joan McGrath—Belmont Shores Mobile Estates  
Thomas Marchese—University Park Estates  
Mike Pugh—College Park Estates  
Ric Trent—Save Our Bay/Naples I  
Ann Denison—College Park Estates  
Mark Bixby—College Park Estates/University Park, guest  
Judy Hess—College Park Estates/University Park, guest  
Marice White—Government Solutions, guest

City of Long Beach:

Angela Reynolds, Community, Environmental and Advanced Planning Officer  
Mercedes McLemore, Community Planner

### **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER—6:15 pm**

#### **Review of Minutes from last meeting**

Minutes Approved from March 9, 2005

#### **Meeting Open for Public Comments**

- Janice Dahl discussed a wetlands symposium that she attended in Sacramento, CA for the State Coastal Conservancy. She stated that there was a lobbying day when interested parties and agencies ask that funding be kept for various environmental endeavors. She also noted that Governor Schwarzenegger is absolutely behind communities saving their wetlands and coasts, but because of budgeting this is difficult. The \$7 million funding for Los Cerritos Wetlands, however, is still available.

#### **Meeting Open for Staff Comments--NONE**

#### **Speaker Presentation:**

Angela Reynolds, Community, Environmental and Advanced Planning Officer

Ms. Reynolds introduced herself to the group, discussing her position with the City of Long Beach, focusing primarily on her work as an Environmental Planning Officer. Ms. Reynolds handles environmental processes, coordinates documents such as Environmental Impact Reports, Negative Declarations, etc. for projects submitted to the Planning Department in order to determine and mitigate any potentially harmful environmental impacts of such projects. Ms. Reynolds stated that she would give the group a recap of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. She then distributed two (2) handouts to the group— a print out of her PowerPoint presentation, and a copy of a negative declaration and initial study for review.

Ms. Reynolds opens her discussion by going over the objectives of CEQA. These objectives are as follows:

1. To have a document tell decision makers and public citizens what environmental impacts could come out of discretionary projects. (She described “discretionary projects” as those that require an exercise of judgment and review, therefore not automatically permitted.)
2. To determine mitigation measures to minimize the impacts of such projects
3. To prevent environmental damage.
4. To create a disclosure document
5. To foster, interagency coordination of projects
6. Enhances public participation in the planning process

She went on to explain the three levels on environmental review under CEQA. The levels are: (1) Statutorily Exemption, (2) Categorical Exemption, (3) Negative Declaration, and (4) Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Ms. Reynolds listed building permits, demolition permits, and such as examples of statutorily exempt projects, noting that the majority of projects proposed to the Planning Department are categorically exempt. These “categorically exempt” projects are those that typically have very little (if any) impact on the environment, and therefore do not require much review at all. She went on to explain that there are two kinds of negative declarations. The first is a simple statement that the project has been reviewed and deemed to have little or no negative impact. The second kind is a mitigated negative declaration. This document is an analysis of CEQA, with mitigation measures incorporated so that the project impact is below a level of significance. Ms. Reynolds then went on to describe that an EIR is done on higher projects, or projects that cannot be mitigated to a level below significance. This is the highest level of review, and takes into consideration the proposed project, as well as four alternatives for the property. She stated that the standard “alternatives” are (1) no project alternative, (2) project underlying zoning, and (3) two additional less-impacting projects.

After discussing the various levels of review under CEQA, Ms. Reynolds went on to explain the role of the Lead Agency. This is the group that has principal responsibility for carrying out a project. The lead agency certifies the Negative Declarations, and Final EIRs, and often hires out consultants to complete EIRs for projects when necessary. She also explained to the study group that when someone wants to put a stop to a project and believes that the EIR content is inadequate, this is where litigation is brought in.

Ms. Reynolds continued her presentation by explaining how to determine the scope of a project that is not exempt. The first step is to complete an initial study that will determine where environmental impacts may occur. She pointed out certain sections of the initial study that are most significant in Long Beach due to the existing conditions within the city. These sections are Biological Resources, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, and Mineral Resources and Hydrology/Water Quality. The Population/Housing and Transportation sections are also important because, despite the city practically being completely built out, the population is growing and all projects cause some increase in traffic. With the additional vehicular traffic often comes concern about air quality, therefore this section is also reviewed carefully. She pointed out that the Cultural Resources section is also of some significance because of the various landmarks and cultural districts throughout the city. Ms. Reynolds said that the next step is the early public and inter-agency consultation phase, where we send out a mailing list to all responsible agencies and neighborhood groups. The next step is to circulate the Notice of Preparation (NOP). This document has a 30-day circulation period, and is mailed to the responsible agencies, groups and whomever else is interested, including property owners within 500' of the project site. Ms. Reynolds pointed out that during this period the lead agency takes public comments. The final step in determining the scope of a project is to have a scooping meeting with agencies and public groups. Comments gathered from the NOP and scooping meeting are added to the EIR and answered during some period of time of this review.

Ms. Reynolds briefly went through the content of an EIR with the group, focusing on the Executive Summary and Project Description, which are most frequently read because it is a condensed version of the actual report. She noted that the project description includes alternatives to the proposed project.

After explaining the CEQA documents and determining the scope of a project, Ms. Reynolds provided the group with a process summary. She explained that for projects that are not exempt, the first step is the Notice of Preparation, then a Public notice and Draft EIR is available for a 45-day review period. She noted that this review period could legally be extended to 60 days, but that 45 days is standard. After all written comments and emails are received, responses to these comments are prepared and sent to responding agencies. She noted that only specific environmental issues and questions are addressed, and opinions are simply noted. Once this review and response period is complete, the Final EIR goes with project entitlements, such as Conditional Use Permits, Subdivisions, etc. and is reviewed by Planning Commission. At that point, Planning Commission will certify the EIR or send it back for corrections. Lastly, a Notice of Determination is posted 5 days from the approval/certification and the public has 30 days to challenge the adequacy of it. If not posted within the 5-day period, this "challenge period" is extended to 180 days. Ms. Reynolds finished her presentation by stating that the Planning Commission determines that the EIR is adequate when all environmental impacts have been fully analyzed. At that point, the discretionary permit is decided upon, and the EIR is deemed adequate when it is certified.

After Ms. Reynolds' presentation was completed, the group had the opportunity to ask her questions. She was first asked how the purposes of an EIR are carried out. She replied that project opponents are given the opportunity to comment on environmental impacts of a project. She went on to explain that during the review period, concerns are allowed to be aired, and issues will get placed in the EIR and analyzed based on threshold numbers and criteria. She was then asked what is the typical time period

between the 45-day review period and the 5-day notice of determination deadline. According to Ms. Reynolds, this depends on the number of comments submitted. There isn't a prescribed time, per se, other than the time period of review itself. If there are not a lot of comments, then the period between public comments and NOD is short, otherwise it can be very long.

The next guest speaker was Marty Moreno, from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. Mr. Moreno works in the Department of Public Works Watershed Management Division, and came to discuss the San Gabriel River (SGR) Master Plan. Upon introducing himself, Mr. Moreno focused his discussion on the watershed. He explained that the drainage area of the watershed is approximately 640 square miles, and includes various tributaries. He also stated that there are different characteristics of the watershed, depending on location/region. The SGR consists of a mountain region, valley region, and coastal plain region. According to Mr. Moreno, there are different perspectives and differing opportunities depending on which regions one were to consider. The SGR unites 19 communities as far north as Arcadia, and south as Long Beach.

Mr. Moreno went on to explain the actual Master Plan. He stated that a Planning Team, which included the Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO), Rivers and Mountain Conservancy, and National Park Service, did the scope of the Master Plan. He went on to explain that the Master Plan was focused on the San Gabriel Corridor. It is stakeholder-driven, meaning that the community was asked to help the team compose a vision of what the river could be. Mr. Moreno also mentioned that the Master Plan was consensus-based, so conflicting interest and multiple objectives were worked through to hammer out impeding issues.

According to Mr. Moreno, the vision of the SGRMP was for the SGR to be a corridor of an integrated watershed system while providing protection, benefit and enjoyment to the public. The goal of this master plan is to create natural habitats, recreational facilities, open space, flood protection, water quality and supply. The Planning Team used two methods for achieving these goals. The first was to conduct hands-on forums to create a mosaic of visions for the SGR. The second method was to hold individual stakeholder interviews.

Mr. Moreno stated that the finishing product includes 134 corridor projects, connections to adjacent projects, five concept design studies (with hypothetical cases), funding strategies, design guidelines/standards for the SGR, and the EIR. He went on to list the various projects included in the master plan. These projects include 28 parks, 27 trail enhancements, 26 bridges, gateways and connections, 8 habitat enhancements, and 4 educational centers. Mr. Moreno also discussed the concept design studies, which included a San Gabriel Canyon spreading ground at the mouth of the canyon, Woodland Duck Farm, SGR Discover Center, Lazario Creek, and El Dorado Regional Park Nature Center. He went on to go through a timeline for the master plan, notifying the group that it should be complete in September of this year.

Following Mr. Moreno's presentation, there was a question and answer period. He was first asked if he could recall any input about the Los Cerritos Wetlands during the SGRMP planning process. Mr. Moreno stated that there wasn't, because L.A. County allows cities push their projects as individual proponents. He also stated that there are often generic conversations about potential development in wetlands, however the Los

Cerritos Wetlands were not really considered in this process. Next, Mr. Moreno was asked to comment on whether Los Cerritos could be a habitat, treatment wetlands, etc. He stated that he doesn't have enough biographical information to determine that right now, but it could be considered during the feasibility analysis of the land. Mr. Moreno was then asked if the master plan addresses how the municipalities will maintain the Los Cerritos Wetlands. He responded that this has always been an issue, and that other agencies claim their hands are tied in terms of doing too much about maintaining these properties, and that legislation would probably be necessary to determine what to do. Mr. Moreno can be contacted at (626) 458-4119, or [mmoreno@ladpw.org](mailto:mmoreno@ladpw.org). The master plan information is available at [www.sangabrielriver.com](http://www.sangabrielriver.com) or the link from [www.ladpw.org](http://www.ladpw.org).

**Other Issues**

Next meeting is on May 11, 2005. At this meeting, there will be a presentation regarding the proposed Home Depot store on Studebaker Road.